



# MEDIA RELEASE

STATE OF TENNESSEE  
DEPARTMENT OF TOURIST DEVELOPMENT

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## **TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF TOURIST DEVELOPMENT ANNOUNCES TENNESSEE'S TOP ATTRACTIONS FOR 2004**

**NASHVILLE (October 10, 2005)** – From the thrill rides of Dollywood to the world-famous pandas of the Memphis Zoo, Tennessee's top 10 attractions drew more than 10.52 million visitors in 2004, according to a new report from the Tennessee Department of Tourist Development.

The state tourism department's new report outlines Tennessee's Top 50 Attractions in 2004 and includes only attractions that reported attendance to the state. The Top 50 report was compiled by the department's research division from visitation information provided by the individual attractions.

Dollywood remained atop the list with 2.4 million visitors reported in 2004, followed by Ripley's Aquarium of the Smokies (1.6 million), Bristol Motor Speedway (1.145 million), Ober Gatlinburg (865,623), Tennessee Aquarium (856,000), Golf & Games Family Park of Memphis (826,000), Memphis Zoo (810,291), Casey Jones Village of Jackson (770,000), Grand Ole Opry House & Opry Museum (662,495), and the Chattanooga Choo Choo (592,360). (*See complete list below.*)

"Tourism in Tennessee continued to be big business in 2004 with more than 43.64 million domestic visitors, an increase of some 890,000 over 2003 that moved our state from the 12th to the 11th most visited state by U.S. residents," said Susan Whitaker, commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Tourist Development. "And, it is our wonderful array of attractions from all regions of our state that keep drawing millions of visitors from across the U.S. and abroad."

Whitaker said Tennessee's unique attractions have made the state an international tourist destination.

"One look at this Top 50, and it's easy to see why Tennessee's tourism industry continues to grow," Whitaker said. "Tennessee offers a visitor an enormous selection from theme parks, outdoor adventure, family entertainment and shopping experiences to museums, historic homes, Civil War sites and cultural heritage destinations."

In addition to Tennessee's growth in the number of visitors, the state saw a 5.5 percent jump in the tourism industry's economic impact in 2004, according to the Travel Industry Association of America. Tennessee's tourism industry economic impact jumped from \$10.8 billion to \$11.475 billion in 2004.

Tourism is one of Tennessee's largest industries, employing more than 170,000 individuals and attracting more than 43.6 million domestic visitors in 2004. The state is home to numerous international attractions, including the Grand Ole Opry, Graceland, the Jack Daniel's Distillery in Lynchburg, National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis, the Tennessee Aquarium in Chattanooga, the Country Music Hall of Fame in Nashville, Dollywood theme park in Pigeon Forge, the Memphis Zoo, the Bristol Motor Speedway, and many others.

*NOTE: For more information regarding Tennessee's Top 50 Attractions or other research related information, please contact Patricia Gray, marketing and research coordinator at 615-741-9004 or via e-mail at [patricia.gray@state.tn.us](mailto:patricia.gray@state.tn.us).*

## 2004 TOP ATTRACTIONS REPORT

Rank	Attraction	2004 Visitation
#1	Dollywood, <i>Pigeon Forge</i>	2,400,000
#2	Ripley's Aquarium of the Smokies, <i>Gatlinburg</i>	1,600,000
#3	Bristol Motor Speedway, <i>Bristol</i>	1,145,000
#4	Ober Gatlinburg, <i>Gatlinburg</i>	865,623
#5	Tennessee Aquarium, <i>Chattanooga</i>	856,000
#6	Golf & Games Family Park, <i>Memphis</i>	825,000
#7	Memphis Zoo, <i>Memphis</i>	810,291
#8	*Casey Jones Village, <i>Jackson</i>	770,000
#9	Grand Ole Opry House & Opry Museum, <i>Nashville</i>	662,495
#10	Chattanooga Choo Choo, <i>Chattanooga</i>	592,360
#11	Loretta Lynn's Ranch, <i>Hurricane Mills</i>	578,000
#12	Memphis Motorsports Park, <i>Memphis</i>	568,244
#13	Tennessee Aquarium IMAX 3D Theater, <i>Chattanooga</i>	506,000
#14	Nashville Zoo, <i>Nashville</i>	494,033
#15	Gatlinburg Sky Lift, <i>Gatlinburg</i>	487,454
#16	Memphis Pink Palace Museum, <i>Memphis</i>	444,354
#17	Lookout Mountain Incline Railway, <i>Chattanooga</i>	434,119
#18	Rock City Gardens, <i>Chattanooga</i>	405,246
#19	Knoxville Zoological Park, <i>Knoxville</i>	396,345
#20	Ruby Falls, <i>Chattanooga</i>	391,039
#21	Dolly's Splash Country, <i>Pigeon Forge</i>	325,000+
#22	Nashville Shores, <i>Nashville</i>	320,000
#23	TN River Fresh Water Pearl Farm, Tour, Museum & Mini Theater, <i>Camden</i>	318,950
#24	Frist Center for the Visual Arts, <i>Nashville</i>	306,561
#25	Lake Winnepesaukah, <i>Chattanooga</i>	300,000
#26	Louise Mandrell Theater, <i>Pigeon Forge</i>	290,001
#27	Country Music Hall of Fame, <i>Nashville</i>	288,061
#28	Adventure Science Center, <i>Nashville</i>	272,103
#29	Ryman Auditorium, <i>Nashville</i>	270,326
#30	General Jackson Showboat, <i>Nashville</i>	250,000
#31	Renaissance Center, <i>Dickson</i>	250,000
#32	Libertyland/Mid-South Fair, <i>Memphis</i>	246,044
#33	Creative Discovery Museum, <i>Chattanooga</i>	218,000
#34	*Jack Daniel Distillery, <i>Lynchburg</i>	200,000
#35	Nashville Motor Speedway, <i>Nashville</i>	200,000
#36	Cheekwood-Tennessee Botanical Gardens & Museum of Art, <i>Nashville</i>	190,000
#37	The Hermitage, <i>Nashville</i>	190,000
#38	Music City Motorplex, <i>Nashville</i>	190,000
#39	Memphis Botanic Gardens, <i>Memphis</i>	186,000
#40	Lost Sea, <i>Sweetwater</i>	180,000
#41	Cumberland County Playhouse, <i>Crossville</i>	175,143
#42	Mud Island River Park & Museum, <i>Memphis</i>	161,356
#43	National Civil Rights Museum, <i>Memphis</i>	160,000
#44	Bays Mountain Park & Planetarium, <i>Kingsport</i>	155,436
#45	Museum of Appalachia, <i>Norris</i>	150,000
#46	Belle Meade Plantation, <i>Nashville</i>	146,040
#47	Children's Museum of Memphis, <i>Memphis</i>	143,639
#48	West Tennessee Delta Heritage Center, <i>Brownsville</i>	143,110
#49	American Museum of Science and Energy , <i>Oak Ridge</i>	133,700
#50	The Parthenon, <i>Nashville</i>	132,035

*\*Free admission.*

*Source: Visitation information provided by individual attraction. Listing includes only those attractions that reported attendance.*

Attractions eligible to be listed in Tennessee's Top Attractions List include:

- Amusement/Theme Parks
- Cultural/Historic Organizations including museums, heritage sites/attractions, historic homes, estates and plantations
- Dining/Entertainment Attractions such as dinner theaters, live performing art venues and theme restaurants
- Scenic/Natural Areas such as show caves and national, state or local parks
- Scientific/Educational Institutions including discovery centers, libraries and science museums
- Sightseeing Companies such as dinner cruises and helicopter or walking tour operations
- Zoos/Aquariums and Wild Animal Parks